

DR. CHRISTOPHER'S  
*Herbal Legacy Newsletter*

## **Boost Your Emotional Health**

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This time of the year many of us make goals for our physical health like eating a better diet and starting a new exercise routine, yet how many of us remember to think about our emotional health? You will find that when you add conscious effort to your emotional health your physical health will improve as well.

What I have found very beneficial for my emotional health is Meditation. Meditation is a great way to find inner calm in this busy, and sometimes frantic world. There are so many uncertainties out there and we seem to wear ourselves down as we try to keep up with this pressure cooker culture.

Eating wholesome foods provides the body with nutrients for physical well-being. Meditation fulfills our inner need for peace, tranquility, calm and harmony. Over the last 30 years, interest in meditation has grown dramatically. It is no longer regarded as a fad for alternative mind seekers. It is now more mainstream and is being taught in colleges, recommended by healing practitioners and even used by coaches to help their players improve their game. Meditation .... anyone can do it!

Numerous scientific studies have found that a regular meditation practice produces tangible benefits for short term as well as long-term mental and physical health. Some benefits include:

- Decreased blood pressure and hypertension
- Slower heart rate
- Lower cholesterol levels
- Reduced production of “stress hormones,” including cortisol and adrenaline
- More efficient oxygen use by the body
- Increased production of the anti-aging hormone DHEA
- Improved immune function and more restful sleep

When practicing meditation many get discouraged because they don't understand the basic principle behind meditation. Many believe that they have to sit there in a totally peaceful state where their mind never wanders. While this is the ultimate desire, it is good to remember that meditation is a learning process. This process may cause some mental discomfort as first. Muscles are fatigued when you first start to exercise and the mind seems to go in overdrive when we first try to sit quietly and be in stillness.

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The quote that helped me the most when I started my meditation practice went something like this... "Meditation is not quieting the thoughts, it finding the quiet among the thoughts." We think thousands of thoughts a day. Our mind is constantly going, so when starting a meditation practice we have to acknowledge that, embrace what is happening in the moment and move forward.

The definition of meditation is the "progressive relaxing of our mind" or as stated in the book The Meditative Path by John Cianciuse, "meditation progress involves gradually letting go of all unnecessary mental and physical activities so that the mind can move into increasingly refined and peaceful states." You will find that most mental activity is just habitual chatter.

The best way to begin your meditation practice is by starting with what is called Mindful Meditation. In Mindful Meditation you start by sitting comfortably. You don't have to sit in any special position; you just want to be comfortable yet not too comfortable that you fall asleep. Close your eyes and follow your breath. Notice your in breath then your out breath. You can even say in your mind, "I'm breathing in....I'm breathing out." If your mind drifts to something else, acknowledge where the thoughts have gone yet bring your awareness back to the breath. To change things up a bit you can do long breaths or short breaths, take deep breaths or shallow breaths, or count your breaths. You can even hold your breath a bit before each inhalation or exhalation. When your mind wanders bring your awareness back to your breath. Always bring the awareness back to the breath, to present moment and time, letting go of past or future concerns. Keep your awareness on your breath for whatever time you have allotted, 5 minutes or 30 minutes; it is whatever you want it to be.

It is that simple!! These are the beginnings of meditation. You will find that with time your mind will drift less and the rhythmic flow of your breath will be very calming to you. This calming effect will reach through many layers of your life. You will sleep better, you will have less of a knee jerk reaction to things and your life will be more fulfilled.

As Deepak Chopra say, "We transform the world by transforming ourselves." Pay attention to your emotional health.

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